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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 002458

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL SNAR BL
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: BEFORE U.S. VISIT, EVO LASHES OUT

REF: LA PAZ 2370

Classified By: EcoPol Chief Mike Hammer for reasons 1.4 b,d

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In the days before his November 16 departure for the United States, where he will speak at the OAS and UN and meet with U.S. representatives (Dodd, Lugar, Baukus and possibly others), President Evo Morales and his closest cabinet advisors lashed out at a wide selection of USG targets, claiming that the USG has a strategy of supporting a united opposition front against Evo for the December 2009 elections. Following the November 1 expulsion of DEA, Government Minister Alfredo Rada described the DEA as "insignificant" and said, "the world will not end with the end of the presence of the DEA." Evo announced that he is "after the CIA" last week, and in a November 14 interview the state news agency ABI cited Presidency Minister Quintana as saying that the "civic prefectoral conspiracy" was "fed by the empire (the United States), financed by organizations that originate in USAID, the CIA, and the DEA." Speaking from Venezuela, Quintana added MILGROUP to the mix, saying that state security fired on civilians in 2003 (during the riots that led to the fall of ex-President Gonzalo "Goni" Sanchez de Lozada) because "no state security institution is not taught, indoctrinated, and intervened by the DEA, the CIA, and by MILGROUP." End summary.

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Evo Accuses USG of Trying to Unite the Opposition
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¶2. (SBU) At a November 15 rally in Cochabamba, Morales accused the USG of trying to help form an opposition "front" to oppose his next presidential run: "I am almost sure, sisters and brothers, that the next elections (December 2009 if the draft constitution passes in January), all the right will unite on instructions from the Government of the United States." At the same time, Evo reiterated his allegations that USAID finances "the opposition".

¶3. (SBU) Meanwhile, analysts are weighing in on the issue of a combined front against Evo, whether comprised solely of the

"moderate left" (that is, the left without Evo's Movement Toward Socialism party) or united with less- conservative elements of what is now the conservative opposition party Podemos. Former president Carlos Mesa (an oft-mentioned contender for leader of the elusive non-Evo front) opined recently that "a single front (combining left and right) is not viable in the sense that there are very distinct ideological positions between which, eventually, there would be opposition, but this doesn't eliminate the possibility of a front..."

¶4. (C) Comment: Evo's pre-emptive strike against a potential opposition front--aligning them without evidence with "the empire"--appears to be an effort to set the stage for discrediting anyone who runs against him as a U.S. stooge. As of now the opposition is far from united, with as many as seven potential presidential candidates: former president Carlos Mesa, former prefect Manfred Reyes Villa, Tarija Prefect Mario Cossio, Potosi Mayor Rene Joaquin, Unidad Nacional party leader Samuel Doria Medina, former president Tuto Quiroga and even indigenous guerrilla Felipe Quispe. It is hard to envision how this disparate group would come together, in fact, many of the strategists for potential candidates complain to us that other groups and leaders will not step aside for the good of the opposition as a whole. End comment.

Continued Accusations Against USG Agencies

¶5. (SBU) According to press reports, Minister of Presidency Juan Ramon Quintana met in Venezuela on November 14 to propose a multilateral "strategic alliance" of governments and academics to defend the process of revolutionary change. Quintana reminded his audience of Bolivia's recent "torturous civic prefectoral conspiracy" which he claimed had been "fed by the empire (the United States), financed by organizations that originate in USAID, the CIA, and the DEA." Back in Bolivia, Minister of Government Alfredo Rada was also leveling accusations at USG agencies, claiming that the Bolivian government must deeply review the actions of agencies such as USAID and DEA: "it is a process that demands a more-global evaluation to take the decision to normalize this relation, and that means new rules of pay, transparency in relations and respect for sovereignty." Rada said that DEA was welcome to share information in the counternarcotics fight, but the DEA is mistaken if it thinks it can "continue in the country or will return to the country to continue diverting resources of the fight against drugs to work of political destabilization or political investigation--that can't continue."

¶6. (SBU) Rada announced on November 16 that the Bolivian National Police who worked with DEA will be reviewed and those that might have worked "on the margin of the interests of the country" will be fired. Rada warned that if "the police acted as a foreign embassy in their own institution, there will be a separation of these people." He added, "If there are police who worked correctly, with good results, you can be secure that...they will be able to continue their work."

¶7. (SBU) From Venezuela, Presidency Minister Quintana added new accusations against U.S. agencies, claiming that US agencies were behind the 2003 decision of the government of then-president Gonzalo "Goni" Sanchez de Lozada to fire on civilians. "They consummated the most repugnant genocide in Bolivia, which was the genocide of the year 2003, when Sanchez de Lozada was expelled from the country. In the face of a lack of moderation, in the face of the doubts of the high military command to massacre the comrades en El Alto, the Military Group (MILGROUP) occupied the highest levels of the armed forces and took the decision that the armed forces had to massacre the people of El Alto to liberate a caravan that had to supply the city of La Paz with fuel. Therefore, this is not indirect intervention, this is not interference, (it is) direct participation in the genocide of the year

2003." (Note: Over 60 people were killed in clashes between followers of Evo Morales--who had blockaded the capital city of La Paz--and government forces. The Morales government has repeatedly accused Sanchez de Lozada of genocide and recently began processing papers to request the former president's extradition. End note.)

¶8. (SBU) Following President Morales' November 11 statement that he and the government "are after the CIA too," Vice Minister of Social Movements Sacha Llorenti announced on November 17 that the presence of CIA agents is "prohibited" in Bolivia: "there exists no norm that would allow the presence of those agents in the national territory and to verify their presence in the country would be a grave action against our sovereignty." According to Llorenti, the government is investigating the possible presence of "external agents or of Bolivians who serve external agents....the government is decided, and in this there will be no step backwards, on the dignification of our country and of its institutions."

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Comment
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¶8. (C) Morales is already campaigning hard for both the constitution and his re-election, as can be seen by his standard attacks on the USG. His rhetorical attacks have now led to the expulsion of both the Ambassador and the DEA, and cannot be ignored as mere campaign stumping. USAID could be next, as there have been repeated high-level attacks and social-movement calls for its expulsion. Morales' new focus on Bolivian "co-conspirators" (either police working with the DEA or any political enemy Evo decides to describe as a CIA collaborator) will almost certainly instill fear among our contacts, who may become more cautious about meeting with us. His threat to expel the CIA from Bolivia means that any one of us can be (mis)identified as a spy and kicked out should we do--or be falsely accused of doing--anything that displeases Evo. End comment.

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